

THE DAILY TEXAN

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SUMMER EDITION

A FAREWELL TO FOOD

Over a dozen restaurants on the Drag have
closed or relocated in the past few years.

Read more on **Page 6.**



THE DAILY TEXAN

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Cover Illustration by

MEL WESTFALL.

CONTACT US

Main Telephone
(512) 471-4591

Editor-in-Chief
Laura Hallas
(512) 232-2212
editor@dailytexanonline.com

Managing Editor
Eva Frederick
(512) 232-2217
managingeditor@dailytexanonline.com

News Office
(512) 232-2207
news@dailytexanonline.com

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NEWS

CITY

Austin cyclist accidents steadily decreasing over five-year period

By Jenan Taha
@jenan_a_taha

Bicycle accidents in Austin have decreased by over thirty percent over the past five years, yet several areas of the city remain just as dangerous to cyclists, according to data from Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services.

Since 2012 — one of the deadliest years for cyclists in the city's history — the Austin Transportation Department has updated its bicycle plan, proposing hundreds of new bike lanes across the city. After the construction of new lanes began in November 2014, cyclist accidents decreased rapidly, dropping total accidents by 20 percent in just one year.

"The city of Austin's active transportation department has done an excellent job in putting in more bike infrastructure," said Mercedes Feris, executive director of Bike Austin, a bike safety advocacy organization. "That's a big contribution to lowering the crashes around Austin."

Accident rates are expected to be lower this year. Compared to the total 184 bike accidents from January through April 2012, this year has seen a 76 percent decrease in accidents during the same four-month span.

Cyclist accidents and deaths occur most frequently on Lamar Boulevard, Guadalupe Street and Congress Avenue. All cyclist fatalities before 2014 occurred on roads where there were no designated bike lanes, according to Austin-Travis County EMS.

Austin bicycle accidents

Bicycle Accidents Reported from January 2012 - April 2017

Year	Accidents
2012	587
2013	531
2014	536
2015	429
2016	400
2017	44

Source: Travis county emergency medical services

Infographic by Rena Li | Daily Texan Staff

Feris said crashes could be further reduced by adding more protected bike lanes on roads with heavier traffic.

Bradley Houston, an Austin cyclist and lawyer who specializes in bicycle accidents, said the most common type of bicycle-car collision occurs when a car is turning into a bike lane.

"Bicyclists tend to blend into the landscape," Houston said. "With all of the drivers that are in a hurry, violating safety rules, it's just so dangerous, and you just have to stay vigilant."

Houston said cyclists can reduce their risk of getting in an accident in the daytime by attaching a white strobe light to the front of their bikes — an extra safety measure not required by law.

The city has added hundreds of miles of bike lanes in the past eight years, alleviating congestion and leading to less accidents on major roads like Lamar.

In 2016, accidents on Lamar Boulevard decreased 45 percent since 2012, but total accidents on Guadalupe Street increased nearly 25

percent. Accidents on Congress Avenue decreased by more than 50 percent but still occurred in high concentrations where shared lanes or no bike lanes were available.

Jolene Holland Neve, a recent UT graduate and experienced cyclist, said she tries to avoid biking on Guadalupe Street and makes sure to stay visible to other vehicles.

"I always ride like nobody can see me," Holland Neve said. "I am constantly aware of my surroundings, especially at intersections. I just assume the worst and ride accordingly."

Feris said Austinites need to recognize everyone's right to the road in order to improve transportation and make Austin more bike-friendly.

"Infrastructure was built to move people and not cars, and if we can go back to that mindset of 'we are all people,' then I think we can start building that understanding (that) we are all humans, and we're trying to use this respective roadway in whatever capacity that we can," Feris said.

SYSTEM

PETA supporters interrupt UT System Board of Regents meeting

By Wesley Story
@wesleystory0

A UT System Board of Regents meeting was interrupted Wednesday afternoon when two animal rights activists barged into the meeting room holding signs with dog pictures.

The Board of Regents met for a two-day retreat at the Hotel Granduca Austin in West Lake Hills on Wednesday and Thursday for closed-door and public sessions. During Wednesday's public session, protesters Danielle Alexander and Emily Raap, both members of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, were forcibly removed from the meeting room after receiving a warning from the board.

"If order cannot be restored and the meeting continues, those causing the disturbance will be removed from the meeting," said Francie Frederick, general counsel to the board.

PETA wants Texas A&M to end a controversial muscular dystrophy program that uses dogs in medical experiments to try to find a cure for the genetic disorder. The protesters demanded that the regents stop funding Texas A&M until they shut down the lab doing the research.

Regent Janiece Longoria said she is sensitive to the complaints of animal mistreatment by the protesters but wanted to clarify that the board does not have control of the funding to A&M.

"I'm sure that (the

protesters) have been informed that the University of Texas System does not have any control over the allocation of available university funding ... to the Texas A&M System," Longoria said. "Nor do we have any control with what they do with the available university funding that they received, so their complaint to this board is misplaced."

One of the protesters sat down on the floor with her sign while two men attempted to escort her out of the room.

"This is wrong," Alexander said. "We're going to be back, and we're going to keep coming until you shut this dog lab down."

The meeting momentarily adjourned while the disturbance was handled.

Raap and Alexander were later charged with hindering proceedings by disorderly conduct, according to reports from the Austin American-Statesman.

After the protesters were removed, the meeting reconvened.

One highlight from the meeting was the System's report on savings related to the new UT System downtown office building discussed after the interruption.

The System's downtown Austin headquarters is currently housed in five buildings. Before the end of the summer, however, the offices will move into a new, \$130 million, 19-story building on Seventh Street between Lavaca and Colorado streets.

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COLUMN

Tex-Mex culinary pillar but not actually good food

By Audrey Larcher
Columnist
@veg_lomein

“

The cornerstone ingredients should be enough to send any well-minded consumer running in the opposite direction. Flavorless tortillas, bland rice, lackluster beans are components fit for a West Campus apartment meal, not this great state's culinary hallmark

—Audrey Larcher
Columnist

Last week, Austinites flocked to Matt's El Rancho, celebrating the Tex-Mex restaurant's 65th anniversary. For some, the celebration commemorated the 65 years our community has enjoyed classic, hearty food. For others, the celebration represents the outrageous 65 plus years that people have consumed Tex-Mex and honestly believed it tasted good.

Tex-Mex is not that great. But it isn't just not that great, it is white trash snack food wearing an inauthentic Mexican mask. The distinguishably disgusting cuisine originated out of San Antonio in 1880 with chile con carne stands. Tex-Mex grew to encompass more and more dishes, combining native cooking with different settler influences. Now, we relive this history with every Torchy's taco consumed and each bowl of queso defended by Ted Cruz.

The cornerstone ingredients should be enough to send any well-minded consumer running in the opposite direction. Flavorless tortillas, bland rice, lackluster beans are components fit for a West Campus apartment meal, not this great state's culinary hallmark.

But if the lazy foundation fails to startle your gag reflexes, the protein probably will get the job done. Sure, the sizzling hot fajita plate may offer a nicer cut of steak, but the majority of dishes like enchila-

das and nachos do not always showcase the best meat. These dishes are typically drenched in salsa or some other fluid, meaning consumers aren't necessarily inclined to inspect the meat quality. Thus, shredded chicken and carnitas plates do not need to meet a very high standard.

And the cheese. Queso is not just a side dip, but a crucial ingredient in many dishes, a congealing substance that never looks too far off from Velveeta. Recipes seem to rely on queso as a cooking band-aid, calling for the goop when a dish is too dry or flavorless to stand on its own. Austinites do not hesitate to spend hours debating who sells the best queso when really, most dips can be boiled down to the same cheap, warmed up cheese.

Texans identify with this form of din-

ing. These are the foods that associate our cultural heritage with, and brandish as testaments, of our state's greatness. Tex-Mex is available across the country, and in sharing these dishes with others, we reshape our own cultural image.

We deserve better. If Texans are intent on continuing the Tex-Mex tradition, we should set higher standards for ourselves, adding more interesting spices so dishes do not need to be drowned with queso

Illustration by Rachel Tyler | Daily Texan Staff



for flavor. Texans should also look to other facets of our state's cuisines, such as Czech and other Central European influences, and embrace their important role in our cookbooks. Because Guad doesn't need more queso spots.

Larcher is a Plan II and economics freshman from Austin.

ONLINE

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Texans deserve better vaccination policies from their legislators

Fetal burial law presents misplaced, ideological stand against federal courts

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Texas Legislature special session begins Tuesday

By Claire Allbright
@claireallbright

The gloves are coming off as the 85th Texas Legislature steps into the ring for its first special session Tuesday.

Legislators will address unfinished sunset legislation and Gov. Greg Abbott's list of 20 unpassed priorities from the original session, including education, tax reform and a transgender bathroom bill. A dogfight between the Texas House and Senate over these and other controversial topics is expected, as a war of words that began last month between Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and Speaker of the House Joe Straus shows no sign of cooling.

In a New Yorker article earlier this month, Straus criticized Patrick and said he didn't want "the suicide of a single Texan on my hands" when asked about the bathroom bill. Last week in a press conference, Lt. Gov. Patrick called Straus' public school finance plan a "Ponzi scheme."

However, before those items can be addressed, Gov. Abbott said the Texas Senate must pass bills to continue several state agencies, including the Texas Medical Board, which licenses all practicing doctors in Texas and several other agencies that oversee social workers, psychologists and therapists.

Gov. Abbott issued the formal proclamation for the Sunset legislation on July 10.

"The day that all Sunset legislation passes out of the Senate, all of the

remaining items will be formally added to the special session call," Gov. Abbott said about his July 10 proclamation.

The lead-up to Gov. Abbott's special session came amid the launch of the 2018 election season. Gov. Abbott officially launched his bid for reelection Friday.

During a speech announcing the beginning of his campaign, Gov. Abbott celebrated the promises he has kept since taking office four years ago including tax cuts, improving education, limiting abortion and building roads.

Gov. Abbott also used the opportunity to challenge the Texas Democratic Party.

"Liberals are messing with Texas," Gov. Abbott said. "But I have news for the liberals. Texas values are not up for grabs."

Gov. Abbott currently runs unopposed, but he has faced harsh criticism for his passive approach to the regular session. Lt. Gov. Patrick was also rumored to challenge Gov. Abbott for his governorship, but he has since announced for reelection for the lieutenant governor position.

During the regular session, the Texas Freedom Caucus, a group of conservative members of the House, blocked Sunset legislation from passing that would extend these agencies from operating past Sept. 1. Then, Lt. Gov. Patrick seized the legislation and refused to take any action on it until the House passed a transgender bathroom bill and property tax reform, two of his

priorities for the session.

"A special session was entirely avoidable," Gov. Abbott said in June 6 statement. "There was plenty of time for the legislature to forge compromises to avoid the time and taxpayer expense of a special session."

Following the governor's proclamation, lawmakers can officially start filing bills that will be debated during the special session. While only bills pertaining to the governor's enumerated list can be filed, 150 House bills and 30 Senate bills attempt to address these issues.

"With today's proclamation and with bill authors already lined up for all special session items, I look forward to working with the House and Senate to finish the people's business," Abbott said in a statement.

Although the end of the regular session came with a brawl on the House floor and a call to federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Abbott said he was hopeful the special session would be a civil one.

"I expect legislators to return with a calm demeanor and a firm commitment to make Texas even better," Abbott's proclamation said.

The special session begins July 18.

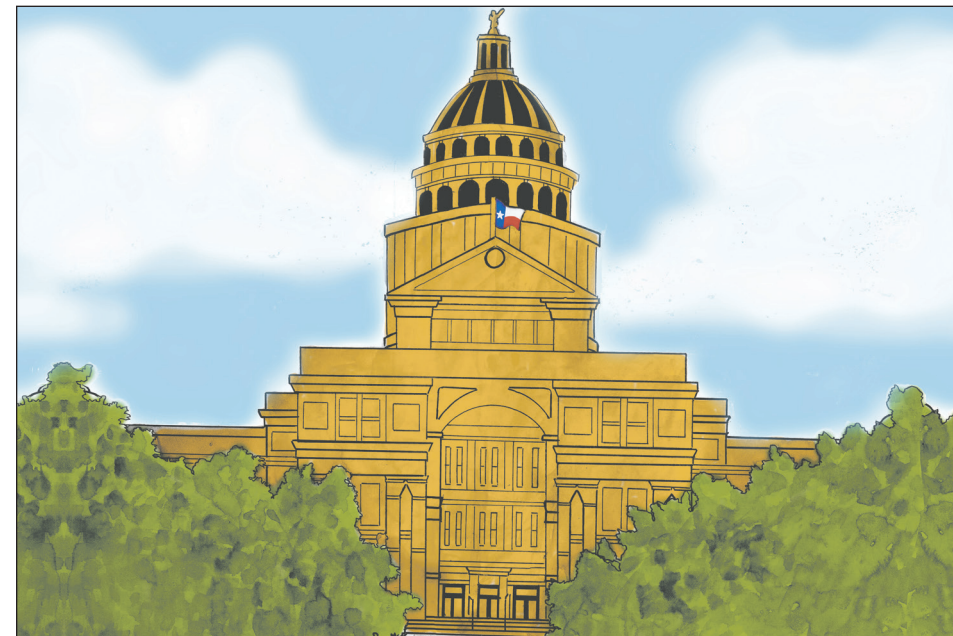


Illustration by Mel Westfall | Daily Texan Staff



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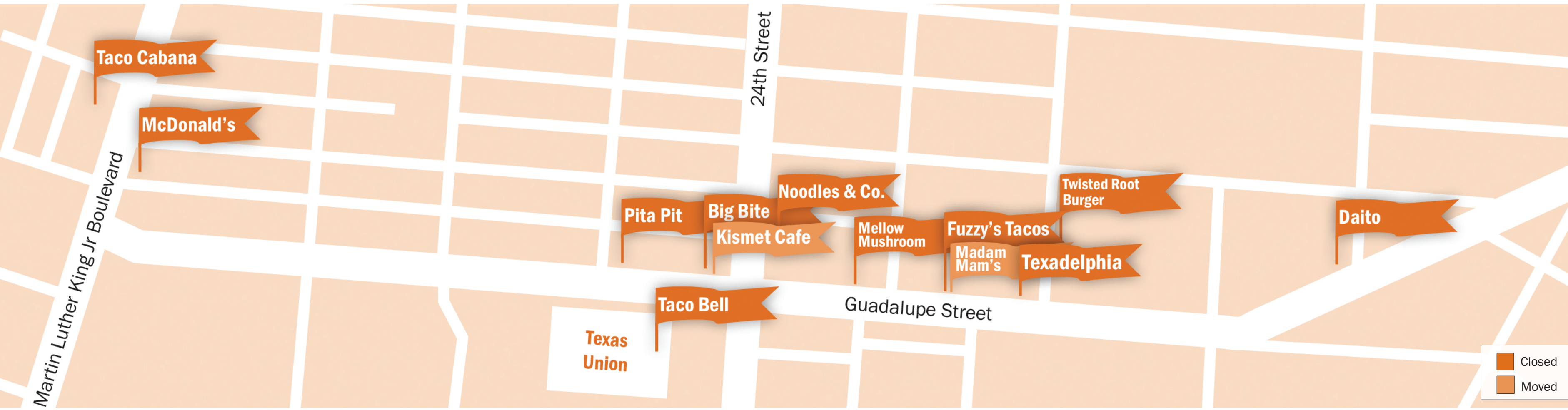
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CLOSING TIME

Notice your favorite restaurant gone from the Drag? It's not the only one.

As members of UT's class of 2018 walk the Drag during their last year on the 40 Acres, they will be met with a far different array of eateries than they found when they arrived at the University. Gone are the days of Noodles & Company and Campus Candy Yogurt Bar. The MLK McDonald's is no more, and drunken nights at Big Bite are a distant memory. Over the past few years, around a quarter of the restaurants along the iconic Austin strip have either closed or changed locations.

The map below shows some familiar restaurants that have moved or shut their doors since 2013.



Students say farewell to popular off-campus restaurants

By Wesley Story
@wesleystory0

From the old days of Mellow Mushroom and Texadelphia to the recent days of McDonald's and Taco Cabana, many UT students are used to seeing their beloved off-campus eateries close and, in some cases, new restaurants open in their place.

Within the last three weeks, both the Taco Cabana and the McDonald's on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard closed. During the last school year, at least three different West Campus restaurants closed or changed locations, including Kismet Cafe and Fuzzy's Taco Shop.

This loss, however, brings about new businesses daring to take a chance on the Drag. Don Japanese Kitchen's popularity among students as a food truck led to it establishing its first brick-and-mortar location in the spring. Some other food businesses that have opened in the area include The Pizza Press, Taco Bell Cantina and

In-N-Out Burger.

The cycle of restaurants moving or closing down is often a result of Austin's rising rent prices, which have significantly increased in the past few years, according to reports from the Austin American-Statesman. Just in the last three months, the rent per square foot of commercial property has increased over 10 percent.

The average rent per square foot for retail property in Austin is \$21.05 per square foot as of June 2017, but rent on the Drag can reach up to \$40 per square foot, according to Austin Tenant Advisors.

In addition to the high rent prices, other factors might affect the success of businesses on the Drag. For one thing, there is little to no parking, and because the business depends mostly on students, summers and holidays can be slow. These complications may make it difficult for businesses to offset the high rent prices.

"Guad is a very popular place, and it's right by campus," biochemistry junior Michael Akanji

said. "Paying rent tends to get more expensive the closer you are to campus because it gives businesses more opportunities to attract customers."

Akanji said out of all the restaurants, he was most upset when Fuzzy's closed.

"I used to go there every week my freshman year," Akanji said. "It was like a punch in the gut when I found out."

One post on the UT LONGmemes for HORN-Sy Teens page, a Facebook page dedicated to UT memes, sums up some students' sentiments about the changes on the Drag. The post includes a video that shows images of off-campus restaurants that have closed and in the background while "Angel" by Sarah McLachlan plays. The post's caption reads "to the dearly departed."

The video, posted in jest, has received over 1,500 reacts and more than 175 comments.

"This hit me hard," public relations senior Alexa Gonzaga said in the comments section of the post. "Gone too soon #neverforget."

Some of the restaurants featured in the video

include Mellow Mushroom, Noodles & Company, Kismet Cafe, Big Bite and Texadelphia. This list, however, does not cover all of the locations that have closed, as a few students pointed out in the comments.

"A lot of these are before my time, so I apologize if I missed some," the original poster, a parody account called "Waggenger Hall," commented. "This video is dedicated to ALL of our fallen eateries."

Some of the other closed locations include Fuzzy's, the Taco Bell in the Union and Daito.

While some students joke about the changes, others have stronger feelings.

Nina Hernandez, government and rhetoric and writing senior, said she remembers the days of Noodles & Company and Mellow Mushroom.

"The new locations don't balance out the old locations as far as I'm concerned," Hernandez said. "I fear mostly chains will end up filling the Drag because they will be the only places that can actually afford the rent."

FOOTBALL

Okafor hosts camp with help of fellow former Longhorns

By Trenton Daeschner
@TrentDaeschner

Standing in the south end zone of Kuempel Stadium in Pflugerville on Saturday afternoon, former Texas defensive end Alex Okafor found himself fulfilling a dream.

This field was like a Broadway stage back in the day for Okafor, who starred for Pflugerville High School and was an All-American in 2008. But on Saturday, it was the setting for Okafor's inaugural youth football camp, which drew over 200 grade school athletes from the surrounding area.

"I've always wanted to do (a camp)," Okafor said. "It's always been an aspiration of mine. We're gonna make it an annual thing so we can definitely grow."

As the sweltering Texas heat beat down on the turf, Okafor led drills in the end zone for defensive linemen along with former Longhorn and current Tennessee Titans linebacker Brian Orakpo.

"OK, get some water," Okafor said to campers as the drill concluded.

The players trotted over to the water cooler while Okafor, Orakpo and some of the camp coaches huddled together on the scorching turf.

"Wish we were on grass," one coach said, sparking plenty of laughter amongst the colleagues.

But despite the near-100-degree temperatures Saturday, Okafor was still

able to bring in plenty of star power to assist with the camp. Numerous former Texas teammates and current NFL players were in attendance, as along with Orakpo, former Longhorns Quandre Diggs, Emmanuel Acho, Keenan Robinson, Mykkel Thompson and Jeremy Hills helped campers through drills.

"A lot of people are not as close as we are," Diggs said. "We're all Texas guys. We love being around each other. Alex is like a bigger brother to me because when I came (to Texas), it was him and Kenny (Vaccaro) that looked after me."

Okafor was a three-year starter for the burnt orange and a two-time first team All-Big 12 selection. As a senior, Okafor led the Big 12 in sacks with 12.5. His most memorable moment came in the last game of his career when the Longhorns beat Oregon State 31-27 in the 2012 Valero Alamo Bowl. Okafor dominated the game and was named the defensive MVP after tallying eight tackles and 4.5 sacks.

He was drafted by the Arizona Cardinals in the fourth round in 2013. And through four seasons with the Cardinals, Okafor started 25 games and recorded 13.5 sacks. However, a rash of injuries has limited his ability to be an impact player from August through January each year. Okafor signed with the New Orleans Saints in the offseason and is now ready for a

fresh start.

"I think they say the average lifespan in the NFL is two-and-a-half years, so to think I've almost doubled that is amazing within itself," Okafor said. "But the crazy part is I still have a lot of ball left in me. I'm just getting started, and I'm excited for what's to come."

His high school coach, George Herrmann, still recalls his early days of coaching Okafor at Pflugerville.

"When he was younger, he was really quiet, and you didn't really notice him," Herrmann said. "He was always practicing hard, always playing hard. You couldn't ever fault his effort."

Now primed for his fifth season in the NFL, Okafor's next goal is to stay healthy and help the Saints get back to the playoffs. And as for becoming an elite pass rusher, he believes he's on the cusp of achieving his full potential.

"I think I'm close," Okafor said. "I've been knocking at the door. I just got to stay healthy. That's been one of my biggest knocks. If I can put together 16 games this year, I think it'll be a special season for me."

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Trenton Daeschner | Daily Texan Staff

Former Longhorn defensive end Alex Okafor hosted a youth football camp Saturday at Kuempel Stadium in Pflugerville. Okafor spent four years in Austin playing under former head coach Mack Brown, earning All-Big 12 honors twice. He is now entering his fifth NFL season as a member of the New Orleans Saints. Previously he played for the Arizona Cardinals.

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CITY

Construction begins on Plaza Saltillo

By Acacia Coronado
@acaciatree18

After more than two decades of planning, what was once a freed slave settlement called Masontown, then a rail yard and home to part of the Tejano music trail, will soon try to find a new purpose in East Austin as the Plaza Saltillo development.

After breaking ground on the project in June, Capital Metro's Plaza Saltillo project will finally begin construction after years of debates and negotiation between interest groups. Developed by Endeavor Real Estate Group, the 10-acre development will include low and median income housing as well as business opportunities.

"The idea is really creating a vibrant, mixed-use community that blends in with the surrounding neighborhood on a rail line, bikeway and a really transit-rich area," Endeavor principal Jason Thumlert said.

According to KXAN, the development of the mixed-use complex was off to a rocky start due to debates between stakeholders and the Austin City Council about the amount of low-income housing to be available and the height of the building. A rally by the Workers Defense Group demanding higher wages was also a roadblock for the project.

After finally breaking ground on June 28, Thumlert said they are excited to begin building the development that will include affordable and senior housing, office and retail space and transit options.

"One of the key things is connecting that part of town," Thumlert said. "Today, if you go out and walk across the site you can't cross it."

The site, Thumlert said, is currently contaminated and unwalkable because of the railroad that runs through it. They are working on cleaning it up and collaborating with the Michael Hsu Office of Architecture to make the development fit in with its surroundings, based on the location's century-long rail yard history.

For the decorative aspect, they plan on using a combination of local art and foreign designs from Austin's sister city — Saltillo, Mexico. According to Thumlert, this will enhance a sense of community for residents new and old. The city of Austin's Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department

said in an email they plan to do this through living, working and dining opportunities and a walkable environment they hope will relieve traffic congestion.

In an emailed response, CapMetro said they are

working to bring economic development, enhanced public safety and opportunities for recreation, work and outdoor life.

Katie Friedman, owner of Solid Gold on the Comal Street end development, said while they are wary of having such a large scale construction project nearby, they expected this kind of growth when they opened a decade ago and similar developments have brought increased foot traffic.

"We are also five blocks east of downtown Austin," Friedman said. "So it is not like it was unexpected Austin would move in this direction."

Clovis Cisneros, owner of Cisco's Restaurant and Bakery located one block from the development, said he has been there for 50 years. Though Cisneros doesn't mind the development itself, he said it is too crowded now and he is ready to get out

and let the new generation take over.

"I am ready to go; they can have this town," Cisneros said.

Though the buildings looked nice, Cisneros said taxes have been rapidly rising, increasing by around \$5,000 in the last seven years. Also, he said everything is so close together that parking is impossible.

Thumlert said they have planned the development to co-exist with the neighboring and surrounding areas, and he hopes that once the project is completed it will find acceptance from the local community.

"We are all very excited to see 20 years of stakeholder input finally turn into reality and clean up a brownfield site to deliver a vibrant, mixed-use, transit-rich community that the neighborhood, city and all of us can be proud to have," Thumlert said.



Evelyn Moreno | Daily Texan Staff

Clovis Cisneros, owner of Cisco's Restaurant and Bakery, stands in the Plaza Saltillo development area. Located within walking distance from the area, the family-owned restaurant has seen many changes in the neighborhood.

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